

VZCZCXRO2160
RR RUEHAST RUEHHM RUEHLN RUEHMA RUEHPB RUEHPOD RUEHTM
DE RUEHAM #3120/01 3210942
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 160942Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3831
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1393
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT 0922
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 5226
RHMFIUU/HQ EPA WASHDC
RUEHDOI/DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 003120

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STATE FOR OES AND NEA/ELA
STATE PASS TO USAID
EPA FOR INTERNATIONAL/FULTON, METCALFE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: EPA Administrator Johnson Visit to Jordan Bolsters
Environmental Collaboration

Ref: Amman 1140

11. Summary: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Stephen L. Johnson's October 17 - 22 visit to Jordan, the first-ever such visit by an Administrator, included the high-profile signing of a Statement of Intent with Environment Minister Khaled Irani to bolster environmental enforcement, and visits to Jordan's Environmental Rangers, the Russeifah landfill/phosphate mine site, and the Ajloun Nature Reserve. The Administrator also delivered a keynote speech at the Eco-Cities of the Mediterranean Forum 2008 held at the Dead-Sea while meeting with several regional ministers of environment and mayors. The visit garnered positive media coverage and highlighted how U.S. Government support in bolstering Jordanian environmental management and biodiversity conservation will contribute to the sustainable management of Jordan's natural resources. End Summary.

Asserting USG Commitment to Environmental Cooperation

12. EPA Administrator Johnson met on several occasions with Jordanian Minister of Environment Khaled Irani who thanked the USG for support related to environmental management and conservation. Irani outlined some key areas of progress in Jordan such as the Jordan Environmental Fund which would provide incentives for environmental compliance, the formation of the Environmental Rangers to enforce Jordan's environmental laws, and the strong tradition in biodiversity conservation, protected area management and eco-tourism led by Jordanian NGO's such as the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature.

Capacity: "We Have Teeth - Now We Need to Brush Them"

13. Irani, commenting, "we now have the teeth, but we need to brush them," noted that Jordan's environmental Rangers had been formed, but still needed capacity-building support. EPA and USAID will work together to provide some of this assistance and with significant print and television media presence, Irani and the Administrator signed a Statement of Intent reflecting the collaboration between the Ministry of Environment (MOE) and EPA to strengthen environmental enforcement in Jordan.

14. During the Administrator's meetings with the Environmental Rangers, Col. Mahmoud, Director of the Rangers, and his team outlined plans for enforcing Jordan's 23 environment related laws. Under a recently signed USAID-EPA interagency agreement, eleven Rangers and MOE representatives departed on October 20 for a two-week study-tour to the U.S. which included simulated enforcement exercises with the EPA. This visit will be followed by several EPA capacity-building courses on inspections, criminal investigations,

and prosecutions over the course of the next two years. The EPA support will bolster the Rangers long-term vision of becoming a regional center of excellence for environmental enforcement.

Russeifah and Ajlun -- Brown and Green Site Visits

15. The Administrator visited the Russeifah landfill/phosphate mine - an abandoned site which is now a pollution hazard and a public health menace. An EPA Science Fellow is expected to arrive in Jordan in early 2009 to assist in the development of a remediation plan for this site (reftel). In addition, USAID has committed some funding for this plan, and hopes to develop a public-private partnership with the Jordan Phosphate Mining Company, the Greater Amman Municipality, and other other donors in the significant remediation effort. The Administrator also visited the Ajloun Nature Reserve in a forested area in northern Jordan. The reserve and eco-tourism lodges are in a protected area operated by the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature which also has plans for establishing a training academy for Jordan's environmental rangers.

Keynote Speech at Eco-Cities Forum

16. The Administrator delivered the keynote speech at the two-day Eco-Cities forum at the Dead Sea attended by over 500 representatives from the region and the U.S. At the forum and a subsequent press-conference, the Administrator shared U.S. experiences in environmental enforcement and discussed the importance of finding the balance between increasing enforcement while supporting economic development. At a ministerial level

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lunch, the Administrator also met with environment ministers from Kuwait, the Palestinian Authority, and Jordan, as well as mayors from several Middle Eastern and European cities.

17. EPA reviewed and cleared this message.

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